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RECENT ART EVENTS.

BY MARY GAY HUMPHREY.

THE Grolier Club, an association of gentlemen interested in the art and literature of book making, and honoring in its name that ancient friend to literature, Grolier de Servier, Count de Agnisy, has inaugurated a series of interesting exhibitions at their club rooms.

The first two of these—etchings and illuminated manuscripts—has been followed by a third—book illustrations. The significance of this exhibition lies in the fact that a decade ago it would not have been possible, since it is directly due to the modern processes in wood engraving, processes which have been greatly furthered in this country. Ten years ago these drawings would in all probability have been made on the block, and the originals, for exhibition purposes at least, been ruined by the tool of the engraver.

Photography has done few greater services than that rendered to art and artists. Illustration now only lacks the anticipated perfection of the gelatine process, which will bring the artist directly to his public without the mediation of the engraver. The personal equation, so inseparable from all human acts, is never more confounded than when is involved that from two artistic temperaments, of which engraving forms so conspicuous an example.

Every one must have observed in the exhibition at the Grolier Club, the perfect freedom with which the artists worked under the new conditions.

Here were some of the best known drawings: Mr. E. A. Abbey's illustrations of "She Stoops to Conquer," for the Harpers; Mr. Alfred Parson's drawing of "Spring Flowers," The Baron and Fleming for Longfellow's "Hyperion," so full of sentiment and color, by Mr. W. S. Smedley, Mr. Howard Pyles' spirited revolutionary scenes, Mr. F. H. Lungren's "Night on Madison Square," and the numerous drawings by Mr. A. B. Frost.

One could but contrast these with the limitations thrown back at his heavenly avocation of trumpet blowing. The position was striking and difficult, and the body light and buoyant, defied with angelic confidence and the masterly skill of the artist that gravity which controls mere mortals. On the other hand were some of the wildest vagaries of Blake's imagination, but all executed with a largeness however crudely and hastily done, that explains the interest that they aroused.

Against these were a number of the drawings of Stothard, delicate in fancy and almost fairy-like in execution. A most interesting exhibit was a water color by the late Samuel Wallen on boxwood for an engraving intended to have been engraved by W. J. Linton. This is probably the only existing water color put on wood for the purpose of engraving, and is exceedingly valuable, both for this reason and on account of the execution.

The exhibition had other elements of interest than those which immediately concern American art. From Prof. Charles West's collection were a number of original drawings by William Blake. These offered a wide range between Mr. Blake's artistic power and extravagant fancy. At one extreme was the archangel Gabriel plunged head downward, with his face very entertaining. These contained a number of colored drawings by Harding, minutely executed to a marvel, notably one of Henry the Eighth, and others by Cook.

The designing class, organized by Mrs. T. M. Wheeler from the prize pupils of the Cooper Union Art School, gave an exhibition during the month of wall-paper designs. There were six of these, the motives all being floral,—the thistle, elderberry, hop vine, water lily, horse chestnut, star grass. Each design consisted of a field and frieze, and in several cases a dado was added.

The most conspicuous feature of the treatment is the skillful way in which the material growth in each case is made to conform to decorative lines, even when most conventionally considered, without losing the freshness and sense of freedom of nature.

For example the thistle design, which is in tints of green and silver on green cartridge paper, makes a series of scrolls purely Renaissance in character. The ornament is luxurious and profuse and its continuity is in no sense forced. But the details, the drawing of the leaves and flowers have all the spikiness and peculiarities of the plant. The star grass design makes use of the motives in various ways. In the field we have short stocks in various perspective and evidently drawn from nature. These are grouped apparently at random and are yet carefully spaced.

DESIGN FOR MIRROR DECORATION.

The border is made by using the grass so as to give its circular forms, and these are grouped like disks between borders, the ornament of which is designed out of the stamens. The elderberry with its flower berries and fine half-naked stems is used in much the same way. In the hop vine the frieze includes the stick around which the vine clings.

The water lily design is most interesting. In the field the large leaves underlapping, overlapping with buds and flowers covering the ground as lily pads cover the water. The color is comprised within the range of a few pinks and greens, yet is so admirably managed that it is not monotonous. There are two borders. In each of these the long, flexible stems and large leaves form disks which are here and there overlaid with a bud or the open lily. The stems are woven around the leaves, making beautiful forms and those especially decorative. The designs have been taken by Messrs. Warren, Fuller & Co.

A work of undoubted interest, whatever conclusion may be arrived at respecting it, has been recently placed on exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum. This is a portrait of Charles I. when Prince of Wales, owned by the late Mr. John Snare and loaned by his son, Mr. Edward Snare.

The New England Society of New York City has contributed to the Central Park a statue by Mr. J. Q. A. Ward, "The Puritan," which was unveiled on Saturday, June 6.